

WABASH RIVER HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

Community Center, 800 N. Jackson St., Montezuma, Parke County, Indiana 47862

Meeting Minutes- July 9, 2008

Voting Member Present:

Allen County - Ron Zartman
Carroll County - George Mears
Cass County - Janet Fawley
DNR – Dale Brier
Gibson County - N. Sherrell Marginet
Knox County - Shane Cooper
Miami County - Ken Einselen
Posey County - Ralph Weinzapfel
Warren County - Margy Deveral
Vermillion County - James McFall and Diann McIntosh (alternate)
Vigo County - Keith Ruble (alternate)
Tippecanoe County – Lucky Neiburger
Adams County – John Friedt
Huntington County – Dave Hacker
Parke County – Penny Cox

Proxy Voters Present:

Non-Voting Members Present:

Indiana Office of Tourism Development –
Jaime Fry

Voting Members Absent w/o Proxy:

Sullivan County - John J. Gettinger
Fountain County - Lowell Osborn
Jay County - Faron Parr
Wabash County - Michael Beauchamp
Wells County – Keith Huffman
Knox County - Shane Cooper

Commission and DNR staff Present

Ron James – WHRCC Executive Director
Shelley Reeves - DNR
Ryan Hoff – DNR Legislative Director

Guests:

Diana Bartlow – Montezuma Town Council
Bernie Dahl – Purdue; Past President, Banks of the Wabash, Inc.; River Network, 2008 “River Hero” award recipient
Dave Hiatt – USDA-NRCS, Illinois Wetland Reserve Project Coordinator
Stanton Lambert – Exec. Director, Wabash River Enhancement Corp. (Warren, Tippecanoe, Carroll & Cass Counties)

Call to Order, Receipt of Proxies, and Introductions

Vice President Neiburger opened the meeting. Dale Brier announced that Shane Cooper and Keith Huffman could not attend the meeting and left their proxies to the President or President Pro tem.

The Review and Approval of May 14, 2008 Meetings Minutes

Lucky Neiburger requested review, additions or corrections to May 14, 2008 meeting minutes as provided. Approved as written.

President’s Report

Lucky N. stated his appreciation for the Commission’s support during chemotherapy and reported he is doing well. Due to the impending birth of Pres. Gettinger’s first great grandchild, John could not be present and sent his regrets. John G.’s report, attached, was reviewed.

Executive Director’s Report

Ron James passed out his printed report (attached) for 5/3/08 to 7/3/08. Ron mentioned that the National River Rally went well, that the website has been updated, and that he has completed his ethics training as requested by the Inspector General. He noted that all appointees were to complete the online training. Even though the deadline has past, the site is still available and all were requested to complete the review immediately. Dale Brier has the passwords and id’s if anyone has lost the email.

Finance Report

Dale B. went over the Auditor's data handout explaining the budget numbers for the year. The Commission did a good job staying within budget with a balance of under \$1,300.00 for the year. The budget for 08-09 is the same as last year which is \$84,627.00 (+ 7% 'reserve'). The accounts will be set with the expectation of the same for the upcoming fiscal year. The Executive Director's contract will rise to \$65,740.00, a difference of \$1,000.00, solely due to the need to 'add' a sum for out-of-state travel, not service hours or rate. The new contract is still not signed as Dale B. is dealing with a debate on whether the executive director should be an employee or continue as a contractor.

Ron J. ran down the expected budget amounts per expense, utilizing a 5% reserve level. The upcoming fourth edition of the primary brochure (supply on hand will last approximately 1 year) needs to be addressed as no one year program budget will have the projected \$20,000.00 available.

Keith Ruble asked if INDOT is going to assign an individual into Ray Irvin's vacated position. No one knew but, as INDOT appeared to be turning trails over to DNR, it was thought not. Keith R. moved that a letter be sent to INDOT to appoint a new representative to the Commission. Ralph Weinzapfel seconded and the motion passed.

Committee Reports

River Road: Dave Hacker reported on progress in Huntington County. Ron J. noted that all counties approached thus far are willing to post the signs and assign their highway departments to locate sites and post the signs. Ron went over the concept; the key being consistency among the counties to aid users with easy recognition. It has been proposed that the Towpath blue banner signs be purchased in mass for those counties tracking the old canal with their trail or river road. This is similar to the route marking used by Carroll County. Each county will have to pay for their own 6" X 18" banner signs. Ron Zartman will be meeting with Allen County officials to discuss that county's route.

Community Signs: Ron J. brought out the Corridor Community sign. Placement possibilities were discussed, as was the INDOT policy against sign clutter which restricts the number of signs per "attraction". Each county representative should work the sign placement out with their county highway department and, if necessary, their regional INDOT. Ryan Hoff noted that DNR/ WRHCC will be responsible for replacing the signs in the case of damage or loss, not INDOT.

Corridor Branding: Ken Einselen discussed 'branding' and the importance of the design of the sign to be the identifier to the Wabash River Corridor. Ron J. reminded the Commission of their decision to lighten the 'old gold' band to improve legibility of the sign at highway speed. The discussion turned to cost and size of the signs. To identify the corridor for traffic both ways, there is a need for two signs per bridge. Ken Einselen moved to pass the artwork as presented. The motion passed. A discussion of the wording was had but ultimately all agreed on the design of the signs. The discussion turned to ordering production, cost, size and the budget. A 36" x 36" sign with the number of signs needed could run \$4,000.00/100 and would have to come out of the supplies budget. There was discussion on the posts and labor involved in getting the signs placed. Ralph W. suggested an order of smaller signs to test how well they are received and to get an idea as to the cost of placing the signs. John Friedt moved that the Commission order 24" x 24" signs up to \$4,000.00 worth or a maximum of 100 signs. Ron Zartman seconded. The motion passed. Sherrill made the point that to get future funding this was one way to get the Wabash River name out to the public to begin educating the public.

Water Trail: 1) Ron James reported the Water Trail opening in Carroll County on Father's Day. All went well, the function was well attended and a good time had by all. 2) There was discussion on the encumbered monies allocated for the informational bridge signs. Lucky N. asked who is 'over' PEN Products to whom an appeal for service could be made. Dale Brier offered to find out whether there is a possibility of rescission and recovery of encumbered funds. Ron James will write another letter to INDOC inquiring as to the order. 3) All members were requested to review their access points and report on 'amenities' within walking distance in preparation for the bridge signage and map updates.

Banks of the Wabash, Inc: Ken Einselen gave a report. The May Tippecanoe County DeTrash the Wabash was postponed due to high water. It has been rescheduled for October 11, 2008 (rain date 10/18). The next meeting of its board of directors is set for July 18, 2008 at Louise Jewell's home.

Legislative: Ken E. offered to ask the Banks of the Wabash organization to put up \$1,000.00 toward a legislative function to highlight Wabash River Corridor needs. Dave Hacker made a motion to request \$1000.00 from the Banks of the Wabash, Inc., to fund a function in Logansport in November, with the corridor legislators invited, to re-introduce the Wabash Commission and our efforts. Janet Fawley seconded and the motion carried. Janet F. will chair, coordinate with outgoing Senator Tom Weatherwax, or his staff, for a date and his attendance, and reserve space.

Education: Environmental Educators Symposium attended by John G. and Ron J. The event was not what was expected but our brochure was widely distributed to attendees via the DNR table.

Old Business

Corridor Citizen Award: Bernie Dahl, the first recipient of the Corridor Citizen, spoke briefly on Corridor efforts and thanked the Commission. There was discussion on the costs of award production for future recipients. Penny Cox moved to purchase only as needed. Ralph W. seconded. The motion passed. Ron J. or Janet F. will order an Award for November.

Retreat Report: Dale B. reviewed Rory Robinson's report on the retreat. The meeting was successful with priorities set for movement on the 2004 plan and the interim goals of the Commission.

Deposit Bottle Bill Resolution: Dale Brier has been unable to make contact with IDEM.

New Harmony Bridge: Ryan Hoff reports that he is still doing research on the proposals for managing the New Harmony Bridge. He hopes to have more definitive answers in the fall, maybe by September.

War of 1812 Bicentennial: Ron J. reported his internet investigation indicates this will be a state by state, unfunded program. The Commission's planning committee will consist of Shane Cooper, chair, Norm N., Stan Lambert, Diann McIntosh, Diana Bartlow, and Keith Ruble.

County Boards of Commissioners: Ralph W. reported a favorable impression from Ron J's presentation to the Posey County Board. The signs were well received. All members were asked to report regularly to their Commissioners, to keep them focused on the Wabash River Corridor, and to schedule Ron's visits at no less than two year intervals.

New Business

River Fest: The Wabash River Parkway Commission will hold its RiverFest in West Lafayette on July 12, 2008. Ron J. will have an information booth set up and could use help to man it at this event. Norm N. volunteered to take an hour from 11:00 a.m. to noon.

State Fair: Ron J. requested Commission members help man the booth at the Indiana State Fair on August 14, 2008. He will be promoting the 8/16 Wabash Heritage Paddle Fest and, from 1:00 to 3:30, showing the film “The Wabash: Life on the ‘Bright White’ River.” Booth hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and someone must be there while Ron is preparing and showing the video. Ken E., Jan F., Penny C., and Norm N. voiced interest and will confirm attendance as the date approaches.

Wabash Heritage Paddle Fest: Ron J. will set up the booth as an unmanned display at this New Harmony event while he, Ralph W., John G., and Sherrell Marginett are to marshall or paddle.

Other Outreach: Ron J. will man the booth in Merrillville at the Izaak Walton League national convention, July 23 – 25, and will do a presentation for a Wells County library series on July 29th.

Save the Maumee: A proposal for an IDEM 319 grant is being made by Heartland Communities’ Save the Maumee committee. This group has reached out to Ron J. for input arising from their connection to the portage in Allen County. Ron was authorized to work with their effort and to send a commitment of support letter for their inclusion with their proposal.

Brochure: Discussion and committee formation for the 4th edition of the brochure will be placed on the agenda in September.

Indiana Rivers Rally 2009: Ron J. noted that space has been reserved at Brown County State Park for June 12 through 14, 2009. A committee is in the process of being formed. Our involvement will be on the agenda at our September meeting.

Announcements

Upcoming events of note: Hoosier Canoe Club has a Wabash River outing scheduled for July 13th. The Art Fair in Merom will be July 26th. August 2nd is “Raft for Riley’s” with put-in at the SR 234 bridge and take-out at Newport (Registration at 9:00 a.m. at Wiley’s Bar). August 9th is “Taste of Cass County” at the Little Turtle Waterway from 5:00 p.m. The annual “Art on the Wabash” will be at Tapawingo Park, West Lafayette, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on September 14th. Penny C. reported Montezuma’s 5K run will be held on October 4th with registration at 7:00 a.m..

Comment by Visitors: Dave Hiatt with USDA-NRCS, Illinois, came to obtain information on the Commission, our programs and procedures, as Illinois doesn’t have a program specifically for the Wabash. He displayed a couple of maps of Illinois counties abutting the Wabash and discussed his role with the Wetland Reserve Program in those areas. Of note is Illinois’ emphasis on preserving and restoring wetlands in Wabash River areas. He mentioned the protection of approximately 2000 acres in Clark County, 2500 acres in Crawford County, and 3000 acres in Lawrence County.

The Commission adjourned, at 4:20 p.m., until 1:00 p.m., September 10, 2008 in Sullivan County, Merom, Indiana (John Gettinger, Sullivan County River representative to arrange).